

# SCIENCE & GOVERNMENT REPORT

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## Reagan Policy Shifts Taking Hold on R&D

The reorientation of federal research and development funds toward defense and away from civilian objectives is cataloged with clarity and fine detail in a forthcoming government report that focuses on the uses of the money, rather than the customary listing of the agencies that spend it.

Titled *Federal R&D Funding by Budget Function: Fiscal Years 1981-1983*, the report, latest in an annual series prepared by the National Science Foundation, sorts out a variety of bits and scraps of data plus 18 months of confusing legislative-executive ups and downs, to show that:

- National security—mostly in the Defense Department but also in the space agency and the Department of Energy's nuclear functions—is consuming a rapidly rising share of federal R&D spending: 52 percent in

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fiscal 1981; 57 percent in 1982, and—Congress willing—it will be 61 percent in 1983, which begins next October 1.

- Overall, federal R&D spending is going up, from \$38.7 billion this year, to a proposed \$43.1 billion next year—a 12 percent boost, compared with only 5 percent for the rest of the federal budget. But virtually all of the increase is assigned to national security programs, which will rise by 20 percent next year, following a similar increase this year.

- Meanwhile, civilian programs are declining; they went down \$925 million, or 8 percent in 1982, and are budgeted for a 5-percent drop, \$657 million, in 1983.

- Energy-related R&D will decline next year by 30 percent, \$855 million, following an 18-percent, \$612-million, drop in 1982.

- R&D on natural resources and the environment will drop 14 percent next year; this year, they went down 10 percent.

- Space research and technology are budgeted to rise next year by 12 percent, or \$657 million, with the space shuttle getting about two-thirds of the growth, while space sciences will receive an increase of \$126 million.

- Basic research goes up, too, by an inflation-beating 9 percent, but here, too, defense is in the vanguard of growth, with an increase of 14 percent. Total funds for basic research have risen from \$3.8 billion in 1981, to \$4 billion this year, and are budgeted for \$4.4 billion next

year.

- A growth of about 14 percent, most of it in high-energy physics, is budgeted for the basic research programs that the Administration wants to reorganize out of the Department of Energy and into the proposed Energy Research and Technology Administration at the Department of Commerce.

- But basic research in health, mostly under the National Institutes of Health, is budgeted for only \$67 million above the 1982 figure—a 3-percent increase that falls behind the rate of inflation.

True to its words, with a very few deviations for political purposes—such as the Clinch River Breeder Reactor in Howard Baker country—the Administration has indeed been forging on toward its goal of getting the government out of research that it considers suitable for commercial exploitation or just too fanciful for foreseeable payoff. Thus, solar-energy research, is budgeted to drop next year from the present \$248 million to \$73 million.

Within the solar budget, a number of major programs are completely out in the 1983 budget and others come

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## In Brief

One of the options under study by a Department of Energy Task Force on multi-program national laboratories is to "Close particular . . . laboratories and/or merge one or more of them with DOE single-purpose laboratories or other appropriate institutions."

That particular choice is being closely watched by Senator Charles Percy (R-Ill.), who's posted himself as the protector of the Argonne National Laboratory, near Chicago, which has been particularly hard hit by budget cuts. Percy is well situated for the task, since he's Chairman of the Governmental Affairs Subcommittee that has jurisdiction over the Administration's proposal to transfer's DOE's energy-research programs to the Department of Commerce.

The White House science office has what looks like a skimpy budget—a mere \$1.8 million for what's listed as a "fulltime" staff of 11. What's left out is that the office—in this as well as past administrations—makes heavy use of professionals whose salaries are charged to other agencies. There are actually about 30 on the staff, but since all presidents like to boast of a lean White House payroll, the numbers get fudged.

## ...Energy Research Drops, Agriculture Gains

(Continued from page 1)

close to oblivion. Thus ocean energy systems, which were authorized for \$34 million in 1981, are missing from the 1983 budget. Wind-energy systems, \$58 million in 1981, will go down to \$5 million next year. And biomass energy technology programs decline from \$31 million to \$7 million over the same period; geothermal from \$131 million to \$10 million, and nuclear fission goes down to \$717 million, after rising from \$886 million in 1981 to \$927 million this year. As for energy-conservation research, the budget plummets from \$197 million in 1981 to \$19 million proposed for the next year, the Administration's rationale being, in the words of the NSF report writers, "that each sector of the economy has strong financial incentives to develop and demonstrate technologies that appear technically and economically promising."

In the category of natural resources and environment, the research programs inherited from the Carter Administration have been cut from \$271 million to \$173 million, with the biggest cuts taking place in water-quality programs, down from \$55 million to \$27 million, and air-quality programs, down from \$67 million to \$47 million.

Among the few gainers outside of the national security area is agricultural research, up from \$659 million in 1981 to \$694 million this year, and \$740 million in 1983. Included in next year's budget is a 40 percent increase, to \$23 million, for the Department of Agriculture's competitive research grants, a Carter-era initiative designed as a counterweight to agriculture's tradition of block-funding for research.

It is still too early in the Reagan Administration to assert that a revolution has been wrought in the federal relations with research and development, since a great deal of what's happening is in large part a continuation

of long-standing practices. But the course has been set for major changes and, even where old practices have been retained, this Administration has added its own flavor. Thus, this Administration explicitly accepts responsibility for a major federal role in support of academic basic research—on the grounds, of course, that the venerated marketplace can't be expected to invest heavily in university-based science. But, most of the growth for basic research is funneled through the Defense Department.

In regard to the health sciences, which are politically popular as well as politically astute in their Washington representation, the Administration has tended to be cautious in its budgetmaking, cutting here and there, but not inflicting the sort of devastation that it brought to energy and environmental affairs.

Nonetheless, the overall pattern is clear: Defense comes first. Anything that can reasonably be expected to attract private support is destined to fare poorly; the same applies, too, to research on technologies that are socially attractive—such as electric-powered vehicles—but which fail to attract commercial interest.

Finally, the Reagan Administration rejects science's ancient ideology of growth as an indispensable ingredient of scientific prowess. George A. Keyworth, the President's Science Adviser, has roused a lot of establishment ire with his references to the therapeutic value of pruning and austerity, but that theme is basic to his boss's philosophy, with the exception of defense, of course—DSG

*(Federal R&D Funding by Budget Function: Fiscal Years 1981-83* is available without charge from the Division of Science Resources Studies, National Science Foundation, 1800 G St. Nw., Washington, DC 20550; tel. (202) 634-4636)

### Shifts in R&D Authority in Major Areas, In Millions of Dollars

	1981 actual	1982 estimate	percent change 1981/82	1983 estimate	percent change 1982/83
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$35,547</b>	<b>\$38,701</b>	<b>8.9%</b>	<b>\$43,174</b>	<b>11.6%</b>
Defense	18,413	22,025	19.6	26,437	20.0
Space	4,924	5,390	9.5	6,047	12.2
Health	3,871	3,864	-.2	4,013	3.9
Energy	3,501	2,889	-17.5	2,034	-29.6
General science	1,340	1,387	3.5	1,509	8.8
Transportation	869	748	-14.0	831	11.0
Nat. res. and env.	1,061	952	-10.3	819	-14.0
Agriculture	659	694	5.3	740	6.6
Int. Affairs	160	164	2.5	194	17.9
Education, training, employment, and social services	298	200	-32.9	189	-5.4
Other	451	387	-14.2	364	-5.9

## New NIH Head Holds First Press Conference

Finally on board as Director of the National Institutes of Health—after 10 months of Administration dawdling following his selection—James B. Wyngaarden, former Chairman of the Department of Medicine at Duke University School of Medicine, held a one-hour “get-acquainted” meeting with the press May 11 at NIH. Following his long pre-confirmation silence on official matters, the session produced Wyngaarden’s first extensive public discussion of policy matters. Following are the major points:

●

*Q. Do you have any marching orders from the Administration regarding priorities or programs here?*

A. No. I’m aware of certain special interests that the Secretary [of the Department of Health and Human Services] has, and that previous secretaries have had, in prevention, for example, but no marching orders.

*Q. Do you have any blueprint or changes in mind?*

A. In a period of budgetary uncertainty, and, obviously a constrained budget, whatever it turns out to be, the highest priority on my agenda would be to continue to emphasize those aspects of NIH activity that have proved so extraordinarily valuable over many decades, and, in my view, that rests fundamentally on the support of basic biomedical science, with a high priority given to the investigator-initiated grant mechanism. At present, about 50 percent of the NIH budget is in that category. . . . Five or six or seven years ago, that category had become considerably smaller, with contracts and centers occupying a larger percentage. But it’s moved back to the figure I just indicated, and I would hope to keep it there. I believe that’s the bedrock on which the whole system rests and thrives. The second high priority, which is closely linked with that, is that of training. We’ve got to continue to produce outstanding scientists through the university mechanism fundamentally, with training grants and fellowships. And those two categories of new grants and training starts occupy a very large percentage of the stabilization policy that I fundamentally agree with. I think the figures are, perhaps, not so important as the concept that we try to maintain a fairly stable approach

to the funding of research grants and to the start of traineeships, and in a period of some instability, those two emphases have done more to stabilize and encourage young people coming into the system than all others. . . .

*Q. Some of the research community does not feel that there is that kind of stabilization. Could you go over some of the numbers for the last couple of years?*

A. Stability, as a concept, was emphasized as a way of reducing the oscillations of the system. When one looks over the past decade, the number of new [grant] starts has ranged from as low as 2900 to 3000 and as high as 58 or 5900, but somewhat unpredictably. Under [former Director] Frederickson, the stabilization goal was to achieve something like 5000 new starts per year. That was certainly not intended as a ceiling, and I would look on it, ideally, as a floor. But in the present constrained budget, we obviously have to operate at somewhat less than that. . . . On the training side. . . . the number of traineeships and fellowships recommended for NIH [in a study by the National Academy of Sciences] is 10,750 per year. We have been about 1000 below that in the current year, and in the projected '83 budget, those numbers would be about 4100 new starts [for grants] and about 8900 traineeships.

*Q. Is that 4100 a real figure? Wasn’t it arrived at by coming up with new formulas on how much money would be provided for the institutions?*

A. That’s correct. The figure assumes some other adjustments in the 1983 budget. One of those is to reduce the amount of the non-competing renewals by 3 to 4 percent; another is to reduce the amount of institutional support attached to the traineeships and fellowships by about 50 percent, and to reduce the indirect cost payment by 10 percent. . . . [Without these changes] the number of new starts would be around 3100. . . .

*Q. Are these figures that you cited consistent with the goal of stability?*

A. Given the economy, they’re as close as we can come, and I think the decision to approach the '83 budget along the lines I’ve indicated is some attempt to distribute the pain. . . .

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## ...Opposed to Adding New Institutes to NIH

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*Q. Do you think the universities have a legitimate complaint about this 10-percent reduction?*

A. The universities are in a very difficult spot...and not surprisingly the universities are concerned about the suggested reduction in direct cost reimbursement. The other side of that, of course, is that that's been a rapidly growing category. The indirect costs were capped at about 15 percent in the early 1960s. . .[But] since that time, indirect costs have grown as a fraction of the total award dollar by about one percent a year. They're now up to about 29.5. . .I think there will be another careful look at the allowable components of the indirect cost formula. . .Some university administrators feel that the NIH should pay the true costs of research, even if it means funding far less research. On the other hand, I'm also concerned about. . .the factors that attract the best young people into biomedical science, and I think that the continued emphasis on the number of new starts and available traineeships are important factors in that. . .

*Q. Could you give us an update on what plans NIH has about reports of fraud and abuse of research grants?*

A. There's no question that there's been some regrettable and well-publicized episodes of abuse and misconduct in science, and a number of cases have been brought to the attention of the NIH in recent years, and

in most cases resolved in not too long a period of time. The total number is still a very small fraction of the number of grants. . .certainly less than one per thousand. . .They're not all of the same degree of seriousness. Some are of the nature of technical infractions of informed consent, some others are undeniably misconduct of the worst kind—frank fraud and faking research results. The NIH view is that this is in the first instance an institutional responsibility to investigate. We do expect to be notified when any such an event comes to the attention of a project director or university official and it is our responsibility to notify the inspector general. . .The remedies or strictures [available to NIH] that may result from that are several, which, at the most serious, may include debarment for a fixed period of time from any access to further NIH support.

*Q. Has that, in fact, happened?*

A. It is my understanding that there has not been any debarment. But there are a couple of serious instances that are still under investigation. . .

*Q. Do you have any opinion on bills to add institutes to the NIH?*

A. My own view is that, particularly in a period of constrained resources, the creation of new institutes seems to be rather illogical. The purpose of advocating the creation of new institutes is clearly to draw greater

*(Continued on page 5)*

## Don't Wish Aloud on Budget, OMB Tells Agency Heads

The Office of Management and Budget is trying to squelch the old Congressional tactic of inviting executive agency heads to think aloud on how they would use funds beyond the amounts allotted to them by OMB.

In a memo dated March 29, brought to light by the Washington-based Consortium of Social Science Associations, OMB Director David A. Stockman has decreed that "In responding to specific questions on program and appropriation requests, witnesses will refrain from providing plans for the use of appropriations that exceed the President's request."

Stockman's memo, addressed to "Heads of Executive Departments and Establishments," declares that "Witnesses, typically, bear responsibility for the conduct of one or a few programs, whereas the President must weigh carefully all of the needs of the Federal Government, and compare them against each other and against the revenues available to meet such needs. Where appropriate," the memo concludes, "witnesses should call attention to this difference in scope of

responsibility in explaining why it is not proper for them to support efforts to raise appropriations above the amounts requested by the President."

Traditionally, the most adroit performer in wish-list testimony has been the National Institutes of Health. The NIH acting leadership, filling in for the riddled top ranks, partially upheld the tradition in House Appropriations testimony a few weeks before Stockman's memo appeared (SGR Vol. XII, No. 5) by acknowledging that their original request for funds was far in excess of the figure that came out of OMB.

In general, however, the science-related agencies, repeatedly advised by OMB that they have fared comparatively well in a tough budget season, are sensibly refraining from publicly clamoring for more money.

For purposes of getting the word to Capitol Hill, there are safer ways to boost the budget, namely, in private conversations with members and staff and through the lobbying efforts of individuals and organizations that depend heavily on federal funds.

## Science and Secrecy: What About All Those Foreign Students?

A new enrollment report from the National Science Foundation underlines what a formidable task it would be to carry out proposals to screen foreigners from so-called sensitive research in American university laboratories. The reason is that foreigners comprise a huge chunk of science and engineering enrollments, and implementation of the xenophobic proposals (SGR Vol. XII, No. 6) would probably lead to the collapse of many parts of academe.

The NSF report, *Foreign Participation in US Science and Engineering Higher Education and Labor Markets*, provides figures through 1979, but it's not likely there's been much change since then; if there has been, it's probably toward more foreign students, since NSF observes that a major factor in their enrollment is "increased recruitment by US institutions to augment" declining domestic enrollments.

In any case, NSF reports that in 1979, foreigners accounted for 20 percent of all fulltime graduate science and engineering students in American universities. In engineering they provided 40 percent of the total, including half of all the graduating doctorates, while in computer sciences they provided 30 percent of the enrollments.

"By fall 1979," the NSF report states, "nearly 45,000

foreign graduate students were enrolled fulltime in our Nation's doctorate institutions in programs leading to advanced degrees in an S/E (science/engineering) field. This figure represents a 41-percent increase over 1974 totals, compared to a 9-percent overall growth for US citizens. The growth rate for foreign students, however, far exceeded US citizens in every year between 1975 and 1979. Although foreign students represented only one-fifth of the fulltime S/E student population in 1979, they accounted for 50 percent of the net growth in students enrolled in graduate S/E programs on a fulltime basis between 1974 and 1979."

The report adds that "As growth in the enrollment of US citizens showed signs of diminishing, some institutions have turned to foreign students in an attempt to prevent decreases in total enrollment." And it goes on to quote a conclusion from a 1975 meeting of the Council of Graduate Schools:

"One suspects at times that some departments in some State-supported institutions actually use the backlog of foreign applicants to top off the tank of graduate admissions in order to meet 'full-time-equivalent' student goals, which in turn, justify continuation of financial support for expensive doctoral

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### NIH (Continued from page 4)

attention to a given area and also... to acquire greater funds. . . At present, that could happen only at the expense of some other activity or institute. . . With respect to NIOSH [National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health—not part of NIH], the NIH has a mission which is fundamentally that of support of research. . . but not of actually getting engaged in operations or regulations. NIOSH sits in between the regulatory and the research areas. . . we think that's not so compatible with the NIH mission. . .

*Q. Will the consensus meeting program [on clinical medicine] be ongoing?*

A. Oh, indeed. There are half a dozen or more consensus conferences in the planning now.

*Q. Could you tell us your views on abortion and whether or not you think that subject will come up as you look at possible grants?*

A. The NIH has not been active in abortion procedures itself. A good deal of research financed by the NIH is clearly directed toward prenatal diagnosis, which then forms the basis for a decision. I believe the abortion decision should be an individual decision. I believe in the freedom of choice, and that the NIH should provide the maximum scientific basis on which intelligent choices can be made. . . It's a couple's decision to make, not a legislative decision. . .

*Q. Would you discuss proposals to alter the principles of peer review?*

A. I think peer review is one of the great creations... and is really the envy of the world. Many other countries are copying it, in one way or another. . . The charge of 'old-boy' networks is really hard to sustain, when one realizes that nearly 80 percent of the members of our initial review bodies are first-time members. . . In fact, I think there's room for concern on the other side, that perhaps we don't have enough of the experienced people recycling through some of these groups. . .

*Q. The Cancer Institute has a number of organizational features—such as the President's Cancer Panel and direct budget submissions to the White House—that set it apart from the others. Do you favor elimination of these, as has been proposed?*

A. I think they've worked well. . . They've not been destructive in any way.

*Q. Are there any plans concerning large scale clinical trials?*

A. No new clinical trials have been authorized since 1978. There have been a few pilot studies. In reviewing the budgetary proposals for fiscal '84, which we are now doing, most institutes have listed some clinical trials that they would like to conduct, if funds would permit. Some would be very important ones, and I hope we can conduct somewhat more than we have. . .

## Engineering Academy Head to Stay on for One Year

Courtland D. Perkins has agreed to postpone his retirement from the presidency of the National Academy of Engineering (NAE) for one year following some high-level differences of opinion at the organization on how his succession should be arranged.

Industrial members, who hold a majority on the NAE Council, wanted an industrial engineer to succeed Perkins, who came to the post in 1975 from Princeton University. But they were advised by seniors from the parent National Academy of Sciences (NAS) that an industrialist in that position might pose a conflict-of-interest problem, since the NAE President serves as vice chairman of the working arm of the NAS-NAE combine, the National Research Council. Under contract to the federal government, the Council conducts studies in which various industries have big stakes, such as the recently completed study on diesel emissions.

Along with the proposal for an industrialist in the top job, it was proposed that a new post of chairman be created for the NAE Council, with an academic at the head. The choice for this job was Joseph M. Pet-

tit, President of Georgia Tech, but, appropriately, in fulfillment of Murphy's Law, Pettit looked at the job and decided he didn't want it.

A one-year extension of Perkins' term, which expires June 30, was then smoothly accomplished at last month's annual meeting of the NAE, which like the Academy of Sciences, follows the Soviet-style of one-candidate elections. The mandarins of the institution will use the extra year to sort out their succession problems.

The NAE is of considerable importance in the grand scheme of things for the Academy of Sciences. With a high level of corporate membership, the NAE is a promising access to the big financial contributions that NAS President Frank Press deems important for reducing his organization's dependence on federal contracts.

In addition, the NAE also has a respectable treasury of its own—around \$4 million—that Perkins raised as a kind of "mad money" fund if the engineers ever decided to part company with the scientists. In recent years, however, they've got along quite well.

## In Print

*Technology Transfer at the National Institutes of Health*, 188-page "technical memorandum" produced by the Congressional Office of Technology Assessment, examines the Cancer Institute and the Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute, and vaporously concludes medical technology needs a better scientific base and more attention should be paid to benefits, risks, costs and so forth; \$6.50 per copy from Superintendent of Documents, USGPO, Washington, DC 20402 (specify Stock No. 052-003-00869-6). Free copies available to Congressional offices, which can probably get one to pass along to you.

### STUDENTS (Continued from page 5) programs."

In terms of the security restrictions that have been suggested by several influential members of the Reagan Administration, the prevalence of foreign students must be considered in the context of the measures that routinely accompany security systems: background investigations, restrictions on access to buildings and offices, secure handling of printed materials, and so forth. The ensuing bureaucratic chaos would probably set American science and engineering back by a decade or more.

(Single copies of the report, NSF 81-316, are available without charge from the National Science Foundation, Division of Science Resources Studies, 1800 G St. Nw., Washington, DC 20550.)

*Projects of the Canadian International Development Research Centre, 1970-1981*, brief descriptions of all 1115 projects supported over its first decade by the IRDC, widely recognized as one of the most effective foreign-aid organizations; 384 pages, available without charge from IRDC, Box 8500, Ottawa, Canada, K1G 3H9.

*Science for Non-Specialists: The College Years*, report by a committee of the National Academy of Sciences, says higher education neglects the science education of non-science majors and urges special corrective efforts, including "more dedication and aggressiveness" by the National Science Foundation; 130 pages, available at \$9.50 per copy from: National Academy Press, 2101 Constitution Ave. Nw., Washington, DC 20418.

*Cosmology Glossary*, a neat compilation of cosmology terms, compiled by the American Institute of Physics, for the use of science writers; 21 pages, available without charge from the Public Information Division, AIP, 335 East 45th St., New York, N.Y. 10017.

## Congressional Computer Course

The Capital Children's Museum in Washington is collaborating with a Congressional group known as the Clearinghouse on the Future to put on basic computer courses for members of the House and Senate. Two-hour introductory sessions are scheduled for May 17, 18, and 20.

## News and No News from the White House Science Office

The Office of Science and Technology Policy (OSTP) has at last equipped itself with a sorely needed personal link to the political innards of the White House.

The connection comes in the person of Ronald B. Frankum, who's been appointed to the long-vacant post of Deputy Director of the science office. Frankum, 47, has been with the Reagan Administration since inauguration day, serving as Deputy Director of the Office of Policy Development, successor to the Domestic Council. Prior to joining the White House staff, he was a professor of law at San Diego State University, where he taught courses on taxes and on science policy.

Frankum's association with Mr. Reagan goes back to 1967-70, when he served on the California Governor's staff and was responsible, among other things, for science-policy affairs. In the White House Office of Policy Development his main job was to coordinate committees of the Cabinet Council. He told SGR that he became acquainted with OSTP Director George A. Keyworth through work concerning telecommunications policy, and that his appointment to OSTP was at Keyworth's initiative.

A senior member of the OSTP staff remarked to SGR that Frankum's White House staff connections would be of considerable assistance to the office in its dealings with Mr. Reagan's staff-run organization. Keyworth, he said, has almost exclusively focused on "the substance of issues" during his year in the science office directorship, and has paid virtually no attention to problems of political navigation.

### Bill Would Boost Joint R&D

Rep. Don Edwards (D-Calif.) has introduced a bill, the Joint Research Act of 1982 (HR 6262), to establish procedures for the Justice Department to certify that pooled research by commercial organizations is not in violation of the antitrust laws.

Edwards, joined by three other members May 5 in introducing the bill, said that a certification system, replacing a 1980 "Antitrust Guide Concerning Research Joint Ventures," would provide more confidence for firms contemplating collaborative research.

Under the bill, the Justice Department would examine proposals for joint research and development activities in advance and certify whether they conform to antitrust requirements. Edwards said that certification could be revoked "if subsequent antitrust violations are uncovered."

Little has been heard from OSTP on the festering issue of science and secrecy (SGR Vol. XII, No. 7), but in brief remarks during a House appropriations hearing last month, OSTP Director George A. Keyworth put some distance between himself and the Administration's wall builders.

Testifying April 21 at an OSTP budget review that ranged over a variety of science-policy issues, Keyworth was asked to discuss reports that foreign competitors were benefiting from US-government financed research. He replied, in part:

"It's easy and it's commonplace today for us to be asking ourselves how we can build areas around our research institutions so that our trading partners and our potential enemies cannot benefit from our technology. I would focus more on the internal problems. We should focus more on getting this technology to the marketplace before it gets into someone else's marketplace and into our defense before it gets into someone else's military capability.

"Building isolationist barriers around America," Keyworth continued, "will in the long run only strangle us. . . I don't think we should focus very much attention on the fact that basic research, which is knowledge for the public's and the world's good, is rapidly embraced by Japan and put into the marketplace. What we should focus on is. . .getting it into our marketplace."

The Science Adviser's role in the Administration's deliberations on the issue has never been made clear. In the most recent House and Senate hearings focused on science and secrecy, Keyworth was not among the witnesses.

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## Political Action: Science Group Aims for Role

The question of whether scientists can be rallied to provide political support for candidates friendly to science is on the way to being tested by a political action committee founded last year by seven scientists and related professionals who teamed up while on Congressional and State Department Fellowships in Washington.

So far the returns are inconclusive—200 members and \$10,000 after an expenditure of about \$6000 in promotion costs. But the real test won't come until the Congressional campaign season gets underway next year.

Known as SCITEC-PAC, the organization aims to inspire scientists to identify and provide financial support for "candidates for federal public office who will work to provide a healthy and productive environment for the teaching of, and continued research in, science and engineering." The Chairman of the organization, Donald Stein, Professor of Psychology and Neurology at Clark University, worked for Senator Howard M. Metzenbaum (D-Ohio) as a Congressional Fellow, and it was during that time that he and other fellows decided to set up a political action committee in behalf of science.

So far, Stein says, the organization has an exclusively Democratic flavor, but that's not for lack of efforts to attract Republicans to its ranks. "We've tried," he said, "but without success."

Apart from short-lived organizations of scientists for this or that presidential candidate, the track record for scientists in political campaigning is practically nonexistent. While organized medicine and other professional groups have vigorously adopted the political action committee format to promote their political in-

terests, the established scientific organizations have displayed no interest in the practice.

Their abstinence seems to be rooted in antiquated notions of above-the-fray purity, which is what the late Philip Handler, President of the National Academy of Sciences, pleaded for as the 1980 presidential election approached.

In harmony with that theme, if only unconsciously, few scientists—and no scientific organizations—apply a test of support for science in making election-day choices, even when real friends of science are involved. This is so much the case that it's taken for granted on Capitol Hill that, while support for science may be good for the legislative soul, it doesn't translate into financial contributions, campaign assistance, or votes. In fact, the scientific community, which is quick to run to Congress for research money and relief from bureaucratic interference, is considered an ingrate by members who have gone to considerable trouble to provide it with assistance.

While the fledgling SCITEC-PAC has a lot of tradition to overcome, obviously working in its favor are the hard times that the scientific community has experienced in recent years, and especially so under the Reagan Administration. Scientists may consider it unseemly to engage in political activity in behalf of their professional budgets, but, then too, it was once considered unseemly for academics to join labor unions.

For further information about SCITEC-PAC: Science and Technology Political Action Committee, Rockville Court House Station, PO Box 351, Rockville, Md. 20850; tel. (301) 424-0002.

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